

MAY 25, 1976

NATO, MBFR AND BERLIN

ANNCR: LAST WEEK'S MEETING OF NATO FOREIGN AND DEFENSE
MINISTERS IN OSLO ONCE AGAIN DREW ATTENTION TO THE URGENT PROBLEMS
CAUSED BY THE SOVIET ARMS BUILDUP IN CENTRAL EUROPE WHERE THERE
IS ALREADY A SERIOUS IMBALANCE IN EAST AND WEST MILITARY FORCES.
THE MINISTERS ALSO EXPRESSED CONCERN ABOUT THE WAY THE SOVIET
UNION IS CARRYING OUT AGREEMENTS ON BERLIN. VOA NEWS ANALYST
JOHN ALBERT HAS THESE OBSERVATIONS:

VOICE: THERE WAS GENERAL AGREEMENT AT OSLO THAT SOVIET
STRENGTH IS LIKELY TO GROW AND THAT THEREFORE LARGER EFFORTS BY NATO
ARE NECESSARY, ESPECIALLY IN THE FIELD OF CONVENTIONAL AND
TACTICAL FORCES. AND, AS THEY HAVE AT TWO PREVIOUS MEETINGS,
THE NATO MINISTERS EXPRESSED CONCERN AT THE SUSTAINED GROWTH OF THE
WARSAW PACT POWERS' MILITARY STRENGTH. SHOULD THIS TREND
CONTINUE, THE NATO COMMUNIQUE WARNED, IT WOULD NOT ONLY GO BEYOND
LEVELS JUSTIFIED FOR DEFENSIVE PURPOSES, BUT IT ALSO COULD LEAD TO
AN ARMS RACE OF DANGEROUS DIMENSIONS.

THESE OBSERVATIONS APPLY PARTICULARLY TO CENTRAL EUROPE WHERE
FOR MANY MONTHS NEGOTIATIONS HAVE BEEN IN PROGRESS TO SEEK MUTUAL
BALANCED FORCE REDUCTIONS, KNOWN AS MBFR. AS THE NATO MEMBERS
SEE IT, THE PURPOSE OF THESE NEGOTIATIONS IS TO INCREASE SECURITY
IN THIS PART OF THE WORLD. THE OBJECT IS TO REDUCE THE
EXISTING DISPARITY BETWEEN WARSAW PACT AND NATO FORCES IN BOTH
MANPOWER AND HEAVY WEAPONS.

UNFORTUNATELY, THE MINISTERS COULD POINT TO NO PROGRESS IN THESE
TALKS. THEY REITERATED THE IMPORTANCE THEY ATTACH TO THE WESTERN
PROPOSALS, WHICH CALL FOR PROGRESSIVE REDUCTIONS IN THE FORCES

OF BOTH SIDES TOWARD A MORE EQUAL LEVEL. BECAUSE THE SOVIET UNION AND THE UNITED STATES PROVIDE THE MAJOR GROUND FORCES AND THE BULK OF THE HEAVY WEAPONS, THE WESTERN PROPOSALS GIVE PRIORITY TO REDUCTIONS IN THESE FORCES IN A FIRST PHASE, WITH ALLIED FORCES TO BE REDUCED LATER.

LAST DECEMBER, THE WESTERN NATIONS ATTEMPTED TO MEET SOME OF THE EASTERN OBJECTIONS TO THEIR ORIGINAL PLAN BY PROPOSING ALSO TO WITHDRAW ONE THOUSAND TACTICAL NUCLEAR WARHEADS IN EUROPE. IT WAS NOTED AT OSLO THAT THIS ADDITIONAL WESTERN SUGGESTION HAS NOT YET MET WITH SERIOUS CONSIDERATION BY THE OTHER SIDE.

(OPT) BOTH SIDES CLAIM TO SEEK RELAXATION OF TENSION IN CENTRAL EUROPE, AND IN THE WESTERN VIEW, THIS CAN BEST BE ACHIEVED BY CREATING A MORE STABLE MILITARY SITUATION. THAT, IN TURN, MEANS PROGRESSIVELY REDUCING THE DISPARITY IN FORCES FACING EACH OTHER THERE. ONLY A RELATIVELY LARGER REDUCTION OF FORCES AND HEAVY WEAPONS ON THE SOVIET SIDE CAN ACHIEVE THIS GREATER MILITARY BALANCE WITHOUT DIMINISHING THE SECURITY OF EITHER SIDE. (END OPT)

THE DISCUSSIONS AT OSLO CONFIRMED THAT ALL PARTICIPATING WESTERN NATIONS ARE FULLY AGREED AND THAT THE GOVERNMENTS ARE SUPPORTED BY PUBLIC OPINION IN THEIR COUNTRIES. BY PUTTING THIS MUCH EMPHASIS ON THE VIENNA NEGOTIATIONS, THE NATO MINISTERS CLEARLY WANTED TO IMPRESS THE OTHER SIDE WITH THE NEED TO SETTLE DOWN TO SERIOUS TALKS ABOUT THE WESTERN PROPOSALS.

ANOTHER CONCERN EXPRESSED AT THE OSLO MEETING WAS OVER THE EAST'S IMPLEMENTATION OF THE FOUR-POWER AGREEMENTS ON BERLIN. THE VIABILITY OF THE WESTERN SECTORS OF THAT DIVIDED CITY PLAYED A MAJOR PART IN THE LONG NEGOTIATIONS LEADING UP TO THOSE AGREEMENTS. IN ORDER FOR WEST BERLIN TO PARTICIPATE IN INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITIES, THE AGREEMENTS CONFIRMED THE RIGHT OF THE FEDERAL

REPUBLIC OF GERMANY TO SPEAK FOR THE WESTERN SECTORS AND TO HAVE THEM APPEAR AS EQUAL PARTNERS IN INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENTS. BUT THE NATO MINISTERS QUESTIONED THE RESTRICTIVE INTERPRETATIONS THAT THE SOVIET AND OTHER EASTERN GOVERNMENTS SEEM TO APPLY TO BONN'S RIGHT TO REPRESENT WEST BERLIN IN SUCH AGREEMENTS. EAST GERMANY, PARTICULARLY, HAS OBJECTED TO WEST BERLIN'S RIGHTS IN THIS REGARD. ONLY RECENTLY, THE SOVIET UNION CANCELLED NEGOTIATIONS WITH WEST GERMANY ABOUT SUPPLYING ELECTRIC POWER FROM NUCLEAR ENERGY AFTER EAST GERMANY OBJECTED TO BONN'S DEMAND THAT WEST BERLIN BE INCLUDED.

THUS, RELATIONS BETWEEN THE NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION AND THE COUNTRIES OF EASTERN EUROPE ARE MARKED THIS SPRING BY A FAILURE SO FAR TO ACHIEVE BALANCED FORCE REDUCTIONS IN CENTRAL EUROPE, AND BY SOME RENEWED CONCERN ABOUT HOW THE EAST INTERPRETES THE STATUS OF WEST BERLIN -- WHICH AT ONE TIME WAS A MAJOR SOURCE OF TENSION IN EUROPE.